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...and avoidance

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Abstract

In the Social Logic of Space it is stated that spatial configuration affects social relations in how it structures patterns of movement, encounter and avoidance. Since then, a lot of space syntax research has investigated these phenomena to provide empirical support and to refine the understanding of mechanisms and relations. However, most of this research focuses on the first half of these patterns - that of how space structures and generates encounters, whereas studies of how space generates patterns of avoidance is less often studied. The outset of this paper is that in order to understand a 'social logic of space', the study of how space generates, allows, or prevents patterns of avoidance is a missing key question that may also further develop discourses of patterns of encounter. Avoidance, as a social action, simply requires a series of socio-spatial, interactive, and shared relations to and through space that necessitates assumptions, presumptions, and speculations of the behaviours of specific or generic others that studies of encounters at times can avoid. In extension, while a development rather than a challenge to studies of encounters, this informs knowledge on the relations between society, activity, and space in general, and on the socio-cultural structuring taking place in everyday spatial performativity.

Keywords

Spatial configuration, performativity, avoidance, encounter patterns, social structuring, spatial behaviour.

1. Introduction

In the very first paragraph of the preface of the Social Logic of Space, Hillier and Hanson (1984) discusses how architecture structures the space in which we live, and that “[i]n that it does so, it has a direct relation – rather than a merely symbolic one – to social life, since it provides the material preconditions for the patterns of movement, encounter and avoidance which are the material realisation – as well as sometimes the generator – of social relations.” (p. ix) Since then, and perhaps increasingly in the latest decade, research in the field at large has focused on the interrelations between spatial configuration and movement on the one hand, and various forms of encounters (co-presence, face-to-face interaction, physical encounters) on the other. There are many reasons for this, including the possibility to observe or otherwise capture phenomena, and a wide set of findings showing relations between movements, encounters and other social and economical phenomena, as well as a growing body of discussion on the relation between face-to-face meetings, co-presence, interaction, and larger scale social effects (c.f. Legeby, 2013; Liebst, 2012; Hanson and Zako, 2007; Vaughan, 2005; Hillier, 1996). My intention in this paper is, however, to address the third term in the quote above: that of avoidance. This because it demands a series of questions to be addressed, and, I will argue, by default demands a more complex understanding of the 'social' and 'cultural' in how it plays out between individuals, space, and society than does 'encounters'. However, as I will further argue, the outcome is a richer model of the social that plays in both movement and encounters as well.

Of course, this is not to say that 'avoidance' has not been investigated (c.f. Hanson, 1996; 1998; Hillier, 1996), it is rather to say that the extended implications and socially structuring effects of 'avoidance' have not been addressed to the extent they deserve in comparison to movement and encounters. It is thus my intention to on the one hand discuss how avoidance actions operate through spatial configuration on the one hand, and how certain architectural or spatial features can be understood as mechanics of avoidance, including how different spatial configurations allows for, supports, or makes difficult such courses of action. For this reason, this essay will operate on a theoretical, discursive level inter-punctuated by empirical support, sometimes re-interpreting earlier work from the point of view of the investigation. It will do so through a series of thematic discussions intended to make sense of avoidance as a socio-culturally structuring, tactical behaviour, each taking a step further towards how the original questions offers input on how human, social action relates to and through space and spatial configuration as well as its social and psychological complexity.

2. On Avoidance

It must be recognised, that when studying avoidance phenomena in architectural and urban studies, there are three categories of papers that tend to dominate literature searches: research on (fear of) sexual assault, behaviour of criminals, and overall safety and security questions in urban environment including CPTED (c.f. Day, 1999; Hollander, 2001; Valentine, 1992; Logan, 2013; Brantingham and Brantingham 1993; Samuels, 2005; Ceccato, 2012; 2014). Of these the first is the most common by far. While this will not be the focus of my discussion, it must be acknowledged, including the disturbing implications of this situation and the why of its becoming – but also set in relation to the research on encounters, which combined risk painting the picture that avoidance in general is a problem or a symptom thereof, and that encounters and co-presence are a kind of cure.

This essay, while dealing with things that have purchase on these situations, will instead rather focus on avoidance as a commonplace part of everyday behaviour that have both positive and negative intents and effects, and how it participates in social structuring. To do this, it must be studied as a complex social, spatial, and strategic-tactical phenomenon. While I will be making use of tactics and strategies largely based on the writings of de Certeau (1984) I am thus not focusing on the type of avoidance tactics as he presents of, for instance, shifting side of the street to avoid an unwanted encounter or the similar discussions of Goffman's 'civil inattention' for how people negotiate behaviour in public spaces to avoid direct communication while maintaining a civil presence of oftentimes conflicting identities or actions (1963), but a behaviour that relates to configuration rather than situation (c.f. Lofland, 1973; 2009).¹ However, in this discussion I will in addition to research from the field draw heavily on the writings of DeCerteau as well as that of Augoyard (2007), Barthes (2009), Ricoeur (1981), Rose (2002) and Butler (1999).

To introduce the more complex understanding of 'spatial' avoidance that I will predominantly be discussing in this paper, it is possible to return to the Social Logic of Space and the example used therein of children playing hide-and-seek (Hillier and Hanson, 1984, p. 37-38). While they use the example to introduce how children can read a spatial configuration and assess its capability to house the game, this can be developed looking more closely at the practice of hide and seek. That is, how hiding depends on an understanding seeking and vice versa. Hiding, to put it simply, is best done where the one seeking is least likely to look, and finding best where the hider has hidden, recursively dependent on expectations on the seeker – and this game of prediction-anticipation-assumption is an integral part of hide-and-seek. That is, the seeker is asked to respond by negating the behaviour that is expected of her or him by the hiders. In more complex forms, such as that of *Burken* or *Kurragömma med Dunk* in Sweden, or *oro* as played by Igbo children in Nigeria, these activities become dynamic.

¹ Goffman's 'civil inattention', which has been criticised for looking too neutrally at something that is oftentimes also a power play and disciplinary behaviour, is largely based on discussing how people interact through knowledge and learnt as well as constantly negotiated behaviour in each situation, pointing to how apparent non-interaction, in fact, is dependent on constant communication in various low key, nonverbal forms. While Goffman does not explicitly speak of avoidance, his work is important for what Lofland (1973; 2009) develops more directly as 'avoidance'.

Both variants of hide and seek activates the hider as well as the seeker and have similar characteristics. In Burken, the seeker has a home base ('burken'), which has two roles: when having found someone, the seeker has to return to the home base and touch it (usually kicking it) and say the name and location of the person found. It can, however, also save the hider: if the hider reaches it unbound, s/he becomes safe and has 'won'. The game is then played either until everyone is found or safe.² In oro, the hide-and-seek is combined with a game of tags, so the seeker needs to chase and tag the ones s/he finds, and the hider becomes safe if reaching the home base. Both variants set a very intricate tactical social game in motion. Not only do 'I' need to remain hidden, but I need to try and reach a location, be on the move, while avoiding the seeker. I need to weigh the risks of being discovered against the chance of winning, and I need to anticipate best possible the actions of the seeker so as to know best when and how to move – which is when neither can see one another. Similarly the seeker need to take into consideration the tactics of the hiders for reaching the base or retreating into hiding in a spiral of actors trying to out-predict each other. That is, the interaction here is both on a material, observable level, and on a mental, tactical level. This paper investigates the latter and its implications for how we understand, analyse, and work with 'the social logic of space'.³

Programmed avoidance: Courthouses, homes, and fashion retail

An initial foray into research on 'avoidance' may most easily pass through how these patterns of encounters and avoidance are regulated in buildings. Studies of for instance prisons, schools, hospitals and museums have shown how these institutions have had needs to more strictly separate and differentiate the range of freedom and access for different actors for many different reasons (Hillier and Hanson, 1984; Markus, 1993). Iconic in the context, of course, is Julienne Hanson's (1996) study of courthouses, a building type that is conditioned by keeping different groups strictly separate throughout the whole building except in a specific room where they should all be able to meet. However, while ostensibly dependent on functional or practical needs, these strategies also form part of socio-cultural conditioning, not the least captured in Markus' labelling of them as spaces of formation and reformation. In *Decoding Homes and Houses*, Hanson develops on this, perhaps as most explicitly in how "[t]hrough well integrated, the lobbies, passages and corridors of Coleshill are designed to institutionalise avoidance." (1998, p. 193) She continues to describe how this is done through how "[m]ovement within the interior, particularly the domestic routines of the servants, is programmed by rules governing conduct which ensure that spaces designed for efficient movement remain empty for most of the time. Activities are assigned to rooms which by means of their local and global configurational characteristics, rationally differentiate service functions from those which are served and common areas from private spaces." Hanson here identifies existing practice of what was proposed as the ideal by Alexander Klein in 1928 (Figure 1), showing 'bad' and 'good' plan solutions blending or separating flows of family and servants (c.f. Evans, 1978; Emmons, 2004). In light of Hanson's studies, it comes quite clear how this is an ideological rather than a practical 'good' and 'bad', conditioned by ideas of relations between different people in the household (c.f. Steadman, 2014).

² In some variants, any hider reaching the home base saves everyone and the game is over with the seeker losing.

³ I use 'we' and 'I' here deliberately while recognizing it can be problematic. Throughout the paper I use 'we' where I am reasoning around generalized phenomena and developing on thoughts, to differ from where I present empirical facts or results of research, and in order to place me ('I') as active part of this discussion on its general level, and to differ it from descriptions of 'other' (one, they, you) placing me as a researcher outside the discussion.

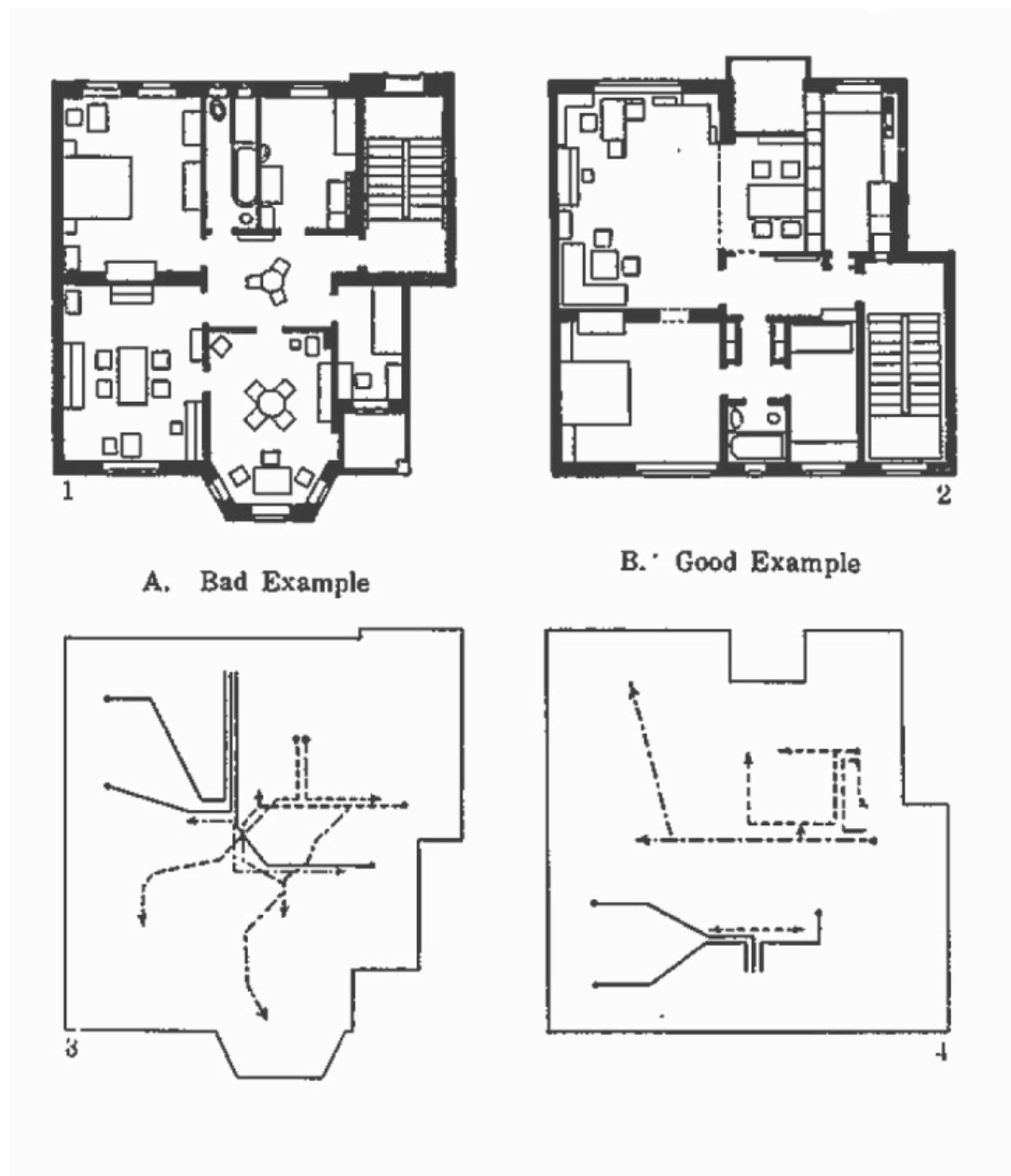


Figure 1: Alexander Klein, the functional house for frictionless living, 1928, originally in Bauer, Catherine, *Modern Housing*, 1934.

A more implicit case of programmed avoidance can be found in the department store Åhlens City (Figure 2) (Koch, 2007). For instance, the two identity branches of 'tailored fashion' and 'street fashion' on the men's fashion floor here both reach out from close to the main set of stairs. However, rather quickly the two become obscured from one another, and the further into them – the higher up their internal fashion hierarchy one moves – the more visually separated they are, and the less likely one is to see or encounter someone or something related to one when shopping in the other. Flows of customers and sequences of actions are tailored to avoid one another based on positions in fashion hierarchies and identity categories. In Hanson's (1998) terms, they are insulated from one another through intermediate spaces, and they are sequenced so that it is clear that one is distinctly separated from the other not only locally but in their global configurational properties.

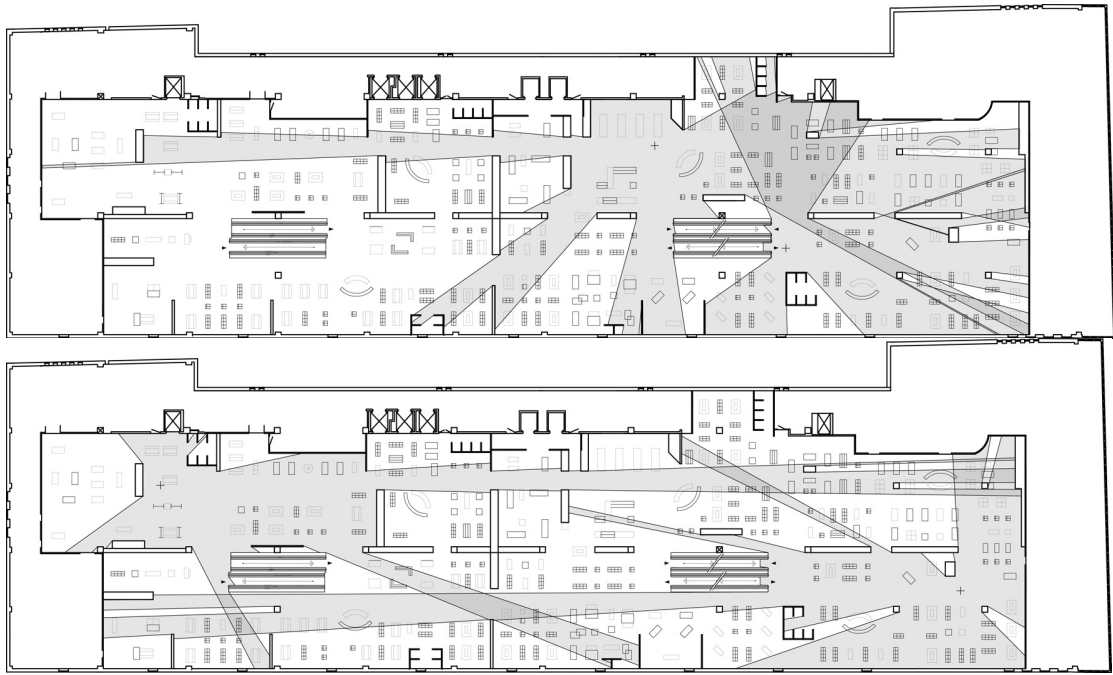


Figure 2: The two branches of fashion in Åhlens City are located so as to maximize the differentiation and ensure that customers shopping either will avoid each other (in the context of shopping those branches). Isovists from encountering the branch moving from the main staircase (top) and endpoints / highest hierarchy brand (bottom).

However, while ‘programmed’ avoidance forms one important ground for the coming in forming stable referents – rules and practices to relate to, allowing, supporting or even institutionalising avoidance through configuration and socio-structural performativity of avoidance tactics – the main focus of the discussion here is on a more elusive form of avoidance.

Pattern recognition

An important point of departure for this discussion that may be obvious but deserves being reiterated, is that in the midst of the complexity that form cities, there are certain aspects of the way they are inhabited that form reoccurring patterns, dependable to the point of being predictable on the level of emergent collective activity. This has been rigorously studied in the field, such as in the well-known stability of relative pedestrian flow rates on streets and their relation to spatial configuration (Hillier 1996; Hillier et al., 2012). Part of the structuring conditions of avoidance depends on the ability we have to recognise and construct an understanding of such patterns out of instances and series of situations (or perhaps better out of the continuity of daily life); that is, our ability to extract a configuration from a sequence (Ricoeur, 1981). In its perhaps most recognisable way, it can be argued that through our navigations of the city we learn of where there are likely to be many or few people, when this is, and general ideas of what goes on where.

This capacity of people and societies to recognise and act in relation to larger scale phenomena, is noted in the *Social Logic of Space* (Hillier and Hanson, 1984) as a distinct difference between a theoretical example of emergent patterns and human settlements, in that to understand the latter one must take into account the capacity of people to recognise patterns and incorporate these into decisions and actions. The role this plays in everyday action is further developed upon by Vincius Netto (2008) as that “[w]e join a social situation by knowing it is held (or knowing that it is possibly or probably held) in a certain place; we ‘refer’ our practices and ourselves to that place, being guided by its meaning, understanding its social content as a context of particular acts.” (p. 374) While there are finer points of meaning where I would argue differently, which I will touch upon later, the main

point remains– that we act in and through space based on our knowledge of social actions in space. Similarly, in an example I have made use of earlier (Koch, 2007) the first time the protagonist and Nadja go out to eat in the novel of the same name by André Breton (2000), the two chose to go to a part of the city where they expect to experience a suitable, calm pace but also where they expect to only encounter strangers – it is crucial for their act to not run into friends or family.

Together with programmed avoidance, this becomes important as it sets a complex and layered relation between society and space, or space and behaviour, action, use, or any other term for the ‘social’ that is employed; while individual perception of space remains an important piece, recognition of the habits and actions of others – both specific, generic, and collective – must be taken into account. In this, it is important to recognise that this pattern recognition as discussed here is predicated by abstractions, generalisations, and recombinations of sequences and events into configurations and tendencies, which introduces distortions and generalisations.

Of ‘Us’ and ‘the Other’

Taking many different forms, this ‘pattern recognition’ translates into knowledges of specific places, of individual others, of groups of characters of others, and of the generic ‘Other’ (c.f. Butler, 1999), as well as types, for lack of a better word, of places and situations both locally and in their configurative context. The constructed knowledge is of a generalised kind, partially formulated as principles or experiences which we can relate to as we act in a made-sense-of city, a sense saturated by both ‘spatial’ and ‘social’ to which one must relate in order to avoid. In particular, in order to avoid, it is necessary to, as the two in Nadja, relate to the actions and habits of others and the Other set in relation to the intents and goals of one’s own. Or: If I am to ‘avoid’, there must be someone or something avoided.

As it comes to our knowledge of others, this can be argued to follow similar processes as that of knowledge of the city. As we get to know each other, we learn codes of behaviour and expressions and recognise subtle differences, including perceiving ‘us’ as diverse, complex, differentiated, and individual (c.f. Bourdieu, 1984).⁴ Conversely, the less we know someone the more we need to depend on what was learnt the few times we have encountered them, and on assumptions extrapolated from what we have heard of them, when we have met someone similar to them in whichever respect we find similarity, or what we have heard about someone similar to them. While ‘we’ are complex, individualized, and differentiated, ‘others’ are grouped, categorised, and equalized into either generic ‘others’, or perhaps more commonly, ‘types’ of others, leaving aside, for now, the relations to the Other.⁵

This further leads to processes of Othering (e.g. de Beauvoir, 1997; Said, 1978; Foucault, 1991; Butler, 1999); individuals or groups being constructed as Other primarily, further strengthened by selective readings. Recognition of anything different may take precedence over any similarities, and actions and relations may stress and strengthen this otherness as well as introduce expectations and demands on these others to be Other.

This is important to note as, arguably, our perceptions of what others may do or intend often depends on generalized understandings of person ‘types’ and a complex and contradictory construct of ‘us’ and ‘others’ at times equalising the Other with ‘me’ (‘I would do like this, so they will too’), at

⁴ Introducing Bourdieu in the discussion can be problematic, but it is here done because of the argument in *Distinction* that social structuring and the ‘membership’ of groups is based on our knowledge of the codes and practices of that group rather than active inclusion and exclusion; conversely, others, or other groups, will be perceived as similar to the point of homogeneity since we do not know their codes of differentiation. Thus there are two differentiating processes at work: between groups (‘classes’ in Bourdieu’s terms), and between individuals within the groups, where the knowledge of codes and tastes is what forms the group as an ‘us’.

⁵ It is important here to point out that rather than a strict typology, the kind of ‘type’ in action here is one that is situationally formed and configured (whether for example ‘elderly’, ‘dressed in suit’, ‘muscular’, or any other characteristics true or false is primary categorising operation may alter from situation to situation), and imperfectly formed from our selective readings and interpretations of a wide range of possible features to take into account.

times distancing the Other from 'me' ('unlike me, they do like this'). At any point we act in relation to 'others', therefore, especially specific groups or individuals, this becomes a necessary component of the act.

3. Memory, mythology, metonymy

If this forms parts of how cities are made sense of (c.f. Netto, 2008), it is worth to stress the term 'made'. This is because making sense of something is an act; it is something done rather than emerging from a process of rational analytical rigour or factual integrity, and done differently by different individuals as well as collectives (cultures, societies) in different situations. For this discussion, I prefer to operate primarily in relation the hermeneutic process as described by Paul Ricoeur (1981) rather than as Netto, the meaning production as considered by Luhmann. For Ricoeur, meaning always remains something that is done, a situational, temporal relation based on interpretation of the known. He sets this up as the triad of the work, the world in front of the work, and meaning, where the interpretation process first goes through constructing the world in front of the work based on the clues given by the work, complemented by assumptions, knowledge, understandings, and preconceptions of the subject in a semi-logical process. The world in front of the work is a construction that takes as many of the for the reader important clues into consideration as possible to become a coherent 'world', from within and in relation to which the reader produces meaning.

The benefit of this model is that it maintains meaning as produced situationally and in constant negotiation as the world in front of the work is always under reconstruction. As a result, there are only negotiated meanings: inconsistencies and contradictions generated by the abstraction and generalisation processes of for instance the 'pattern recognition' and processes of subjectification and Othering discussed above, are constantly renegotiated to provide a reasonably enough coherent World in relation to which meanings can be made in the situation in which the 'reader' acts.

What this 'knowledge' that facilitates in the construction of the 'World in front of the Work' is, however, in need of some scrutiny, as it has a special kind of character that even further elucidates to social character of avoidance – namely that it is always fundamentally imperfect, piecemeal and assembled. No matter how well we know any specific person or what knowledge we have of groups and their habits, we do not know the full, saturated complexity of them as individuals or groups, nor do we usually know their specific locations, actions, and behaviours when we are not around them. In most cases, furthermore, the knowledge is constructed from a range of sources that provide anything from concrete information to loosely formulated assumptions or prejudices, with widely different sources. For this reason, I chose to take the discussion further through the filters of memory, mythology, and metonymy (c.f. de Certeau, 1984; Burgin, 1996; Kaye, 2000; Barthes, 2009; Augoyard, 2007), as I believe they provide a good set of filters from which to understand 'avoidance' and its relation to socio-cultural structuring processes.

Memory here means knowledge constructed through personal experience. While not providing 'truth', it forms a direct source of reference. It can be regarding either individuals, groups, people in general, or places, all depending on degrees of abstractions, categorisations, and projections. For instance, Augoyard (2007) gives as one example how an elderly woman prefers to not go through the suburb's centre because she has experienced that certain groups of youths tend to hang out there. The knowledge from her memory here stops dead at the point of 'often when I have visited the centre there have been people who appear to be youths there', but this is extended through interpretations of their behaviour and assumptions of their mindsets and intents. 'Memory' further works well since it highlights the ambiguous relation to truth in how it can change over time, and how what one remembers and how one remembers it is related to what one has experienced before as well as will affect future memory making (c.f. Burgin, 1996; Kaye, 2000).

Mythology, in comparison, stands for knowledge gained from others regarding yet others. The reason to use 'mythology' here is due to how 'myth' always stands in an unclear relation to the amount of 'truth' which it contains, and the inability to discern from the myth itself the degree to which it is true due to this nature (c.f. Barthes, 2009). The myth also provides meaningful

information regardless of its truth; it does not matter whether it is true that a certain person or group does one thing or the other – the impact of the myth depends on how it translates into meaningful information related to in discourse and action.

Many of the myths I refer to here are things ‘people know’, without being fully able to say how come they know or where they learnt it from; societal myths that are propagated by most everyone often without clear origins or intentions – established ‘social knowledge’. Lofland (2009) gives the example of how discourses of danger and especially sexual assault can be seen as much as a form of disciplining of (young) women as much as or more than for safe-keeping, although she questions the extent to which the discourse specifically and the type of discourse in general affects actual behaviour, whereas others (e.g. Day, 1999; Augoyard, 1997) clearly show how, while not unambiguously, it does so. But I also include a range of more directly second-hand information having a similar character due to being imprecise – it may be due exaggeration, memory slips, interpretations, or simply how retelling is unable to give full account for the complexity of the situation or the sequences of events leading to and following from it.⁶ Filtering the discussion through mythology allows us to study the effects of the myths rather than their basis, ‘truthfulness’, or the intents behind their propagation.⁷

Metonymy, finally, is a process of substitution by means of contingency. That is, that something is allowed to stand in for something else by means of representational reference, such as ‘Wall Street’ can stand for the U.S. financial and corporate sector. The reason why this is of interest, is because arguably, the metonymy may serve as the referent as much as that to which it refers when we speak of mythology or sense-making as does Netto. That is, a ‘dark tunnel’ can come to stand for danger not because it is dangerous as such, but because it holds a metonymic relationship to a range of acts which one might wish to avoid, or a playground could come to stand for children, play, or happiness dependent on memories, myths and experiences. Specifically here, the ‘dark tunnel’ can additionally be used to understand the synecdoche; it is highly possible that rather than a tunnel specifically, it is a larger scale configurational and spatial situation that allows the type of activity perceived as dangerous to take place and the tunnel to be perceived as dangerous, but it falls on the tunnel, specifically, to take on the metonymic relationship to ‘danger’.

It may be of interest here to relate to Slavoj Žižek’s *The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology* (2012), where he fairly extensively discusses how, specifically, fear tends to take this kind of form – that is, fears are allowed to materialize and coalesce into specific figures such as the shark in *Jaws* can stand for a wide range of unrelated fears for many different people. On one hand, Žižek here discusses how something symbolically can represent something else, but on the other hand, he specifically discusses how large, complex issues are allowed to be simplified to smaller, simpler, and not the least identifiable things. Metonymy and synecdoche, however, can also be used as figures to describe how certain individuals, acts, or behaviours come to stand for a group, for others, for the generic other, or for the Other.

The most consolidated empirical support for these figures and the argument until this point, arguably, comes from the considerable work of Jean-Francois Augoyard in *Step by Step: Everyday walks in a French urban housing project* (2007). In his investigations of a French suburb he shows how rather than distinct factual information, the inhabitants relate to a set of ideas that can be largely summarized as the above, although he differentiates further. In this he clearly demonstrates how people relate to such ‘figures’ rather than ‘facts’ as they decide what to do and how to go about doing it.⁸ In this, it is constantly reoccurring how they relate to imperfect, simplified, abstracted, or generalized figures, sometimes in the form of concrete places as representative of

⁶ I want to stress I am not saying people are not truthful or that they are intentionally misleading – the transformation into myths is based on the imperfection of memory and communication, as well as the aforementioned inability for anyone to grasp the full complexity of any individual situation or person.

⁷ This is not to say that studying the basis and generation of myths is not of equal importance, it is rather to say that for the discussion of this essay it is the effects of myths that are of interest, and it is specifically that myths in this sense *has* purchase on action that makes the term productive.

⁸ The two may at times appear to be the same, but I would preliminarily argue that in the case they do, it would still be the figure that is related to rather than the facts themselves.

these, and at other times in relation to specific understanding of others or the Other, which is what has been developed above as memory, myth and metonymy on the one hand, and as the world in front of the work on the other, as an intermediate between the concrete, material 'real' and the situated, individual meaning-making.

4. Again, avoidance

In tactical or strategic avoidance, then, memory, myth and metonymy plays a crucial role as it depends on projecting and assuming the intentions and actions of the Other. I can here remind of the different forms of hide-and-seek: in similar ways, avoidance as a tactical or strategic portion of action relates to memories, myths and metonymies to facilitate relations to the others, the generic other, the Other; the activities, events, risks or potentials one wishes to avoid. It is in place again to stress that this avoidance is not by necessity from something 'bad', but rather from something not suitable for the current mood, intentions, plans or preferences. Or simply put; some things we do together, some we don't (Koch, 2007). One might on a first date avoid places where one is most likely to encounter friends, acquaintances or relatives; one may avoid most everyone else when going for a quiet picnic; one may avoid specific others when buying a gift; or one may simply not be in the mood, be in a rush, or have any other everyday reason to prefer to not meet someone and risk being rude. This is a reasoning similar to Netto's that

"[...] this semanticised space may become part of the unfolding connections between events across space-time – that is, the formation of communication networks beyond the spatial boundaries of the event, when actors access media of communication (say, exchanging or accessing words, texts, hypertexts, or objects with other actors in other places and times), or leave, intentionally or not, traces (in the form of objects, words, images, effects of their very acts) that may relate to absent actors or communicate to acts already performed or yet to be performed elsewhere." (2008, p. 376)

However, as different from Netto's discussion, avoidance as discussed here requires a tactical, projective relation to the environment where 'my' actions as well as others' are assumed and projected into the future based on what knowledge, true or false, one has with which to do so, which is where memory, myth, and metonymy comes into play. Two persons, or groups, avoiding one another would be caught in a dynamic, ever-renegotiated game of hide-and-seek – or perhaps hide-and-hide – not entirely different from Goffman's (1963) discussion on civil inattention but on a level related to spatial configuration and chance of co-presence rather than at face-value of being in the same space, which may result in temporarily stable patterns or a constantly shifting range of actions and states.

Spatial configuration and avoidance

Before concluding, I will briefly return to some of the spatial conditions of 'avoidance'. To start, it can be noted that the series, tree, and network configured conceptual plans in the Social Logic of Space (1984, c.f. Foucault 1997) or the plans of Palazzo Antonini (Andrea Palladio, 1556) and The Red House (Philip Webb, 1859) in Robin Evans' *Figures, Doors and Passages* (1978) are radically differently appropriate for 'hide-and-seek' variants. The series, for all practical intents and purposes, is not meaningful for the game. The tree, similarly to The Red House, allows for slightly better possibilities, as hidens can potentially reposition themselves while the seeker searches a branch, leaving the spine unsupervised. The network, finally, or the Palazzo Antonini, sets the dynamics more in motion: allowing for any action to be countered, the game of anticipation and tactics become richer and more even.

At first it seems, thus, that the more distributed a system, the more it allows avoidance. However, one should not too readily accept this, as it can be further said that the more distributed a system, the less predictive it becomes. While 'I' do not have to pass through any specific spaces, neither does anyone else. Offering more possibilities of avoidance, a more distributed system further requires more assumptions of the actions of that which one intends to avoid. There comes a point (as noted also by Hillier and Hanson) where a game of hide-and-seek falls because the environment is too rich

of alternatives. This is not to say there is a perfect mean as a generic principle, but to point to qualitative differences that emerge after a certain degree of control and surveillance is left behind. Different activities would relate differently to configuration from this point of view. This further relates to whether one acts in the whole or in sub-sections of the system. Hanson (1998) for instance, notes how while Hardwick Hall is hierarchically structured globally, “[t]he deep, ringy structure which lies beyond Bess’s private, separate and protected sub-complex is well nigh impossible to police” (p. 193) but furthermore, that “this may be unnecessary and even undesirable where the occupants have shared attitudes and values.”

In this sense, one can further understand the social processes and conditions of what Hillier discussed as distributed and structured systems in his key note in Santiago (c.f. Hillier et al., 2012). The weighting here lies between the richness of alternatives of distributed systems, and the higher predictability of structured systems, with far reaching, complex implications for activity and social structuring.

5. Conclusions: Avoidance and the performative dynamics of social structures

To conclude, I will reiterate a few things from above, and return to the question of why ‘avoidance’. I will begin this where I began the paper: I believe that study of avoidance leads to that a range of questions need to be answered regarding relations between activity and space, which potentially can be disregarded in a discussion of movement and encounters. I will also stress again that this is not to fundamentally differentiate avoidance from movement and encounters. While many of the immediate examples that may come to mind as we speak of avoidance may be troublesome or form heterotopias (Foucault, 1997), that is, spaces, activities or events that take place ‘outside’ of the hegemonic structures, part of the argument is that this potential gut-reaction need to be avoided. Both because, as Mary McLeod notes in ‘Everyday and “Other” Spaces’ (1996), heterotopias as concept can as well be used to describe everyday spaces and activities of regular life for if not all then many or most, some of which may form pockets of freedom in the duree of daily life (c.f. de Certeau’s ‘network of anti discipline’, 1984, p. xv). Lofland (2009) provides further examples of how avoidance form an important part in much of urban life allowing individuals or groups who may have conflicting interests to live together either by direct, shared ‘inattention’ as they meet (c.f. Goffman, 1963), or by shared knowledge allowing stressful meetings to be avoided. She further points to how this inattention is dependent on constant ongoing negotiation and interaction to be maintained.

Still, while the various forms of heterotopias possible to relate to avoidance forms an important piece of the argument, the way in which those that avoid or are avoided can be dislocated, displaced or excluded with various direct spatial and material implications, the main form of avoidance discussed herein should rather be related to de Certeau’s spatial tactics as played out in collective socio-cultural spatial dynamics. In part a form of what Sharon Zukin (1995) labels the ‘negotiation of public culture’, but not restricted as Zukin’s term to ‘public’ but as part of the structuring of ‘the social’ as a whole as a performative, enacted system (c.f. Butler, 1999; Rose, 2002).

All of this points towards that, as Mitch Rose (2002) observes regarding resistance geographies, it would be faulty to assume that there is one dominant hegemony operating on its own terms, pre-existing actions and reactions, and a completely other to resist it. Rather, they must be considered as part of the same, that is, while I here discuss avoidance specifically, these ‘patterns’ to recognise are the result of similar dynamic, interactive processes, actions and reactions.

To conclude, then, a few notes can be made in respect to the discussion held throughout this paper:

First, it can be noted how the constantly ongoing sense-making, othering, subjectification, and negotiated actions and relations highlighted here form integrated parts of any action and activity. That is, it is clear how any social action depends on memories, mythologies, and metonymies in addition to material and functional aspects, where the latter could be argued to be included in the former. Focusing on avoidance has allowed and necessitated these to be addressed in-depth.

Second, it can be noted how this leads to enactment of perceptions and structures related to this, which performatively formulates, defines, and describes social and cultural relations through how it participates in structuring encounters and avoidances; this takes place both directly in who meets whom, and indirectly in who means to meet or avoid whom, and whom is expected to meet or avoid whom, propagated through society through its own enactment, with implications for just what co-absence could be as different from just 'empty' or 'unused' space.⁹ That is, myths, memories and metonymies are *reified through their direct or indirect enactment as temporary (approximations of) truths*.

Third, these form complex patterns of action that in part formulate the basis for themselves that are constantly renegotiated on several levels, as the encounters that do happen can challenge, confirm, twist, or alter perceptions, attitudes and expectations directly or over time – dependent on the way they are interpreted, which is interdependent with perceptions and ideas, processes of subjectification and othering, as discussed here as well as well as ideas of societal structures and processes.

These three notes are concerned with the performative, that is, the way structures emerge through their enactment. In this line of reasoning, social structures are neither pre-existent nor false, but exist for as long as they are enacted either through the mechanics that generate them, or as related to in conforming and resisting acts. As Rose (2008) notes, "[t]his is the uniqueness of performative systems: they rely on instability, elaboration, and difference, rather than stability, consistency, and routine. As the meaning of texts are extended through different contexts, their meaningfulness as referents become an entrenched feature of social life." (p. 393)

An absolute necessity for this discussion, however, is that the focus is not set on how individuals or collectives relate to space. Rather, as elsewhere argued a necessary component for understanding Loos' Baker house (Koch, 2013), the discussion herein necessitates understanding social relations as enacted, perceived, projected, and related to through space. However, in relation to the discussion on the Baker House, which is focused on a specific building and relations of a few individuals through space, this discussion expands a similar reasoning both in scale and number of people, as well as makes this type of relation its integral foci. In relation to these dynamics of social interplay through space, the way space is perceived and understood by individuals formulates an important but insufficient component, in that society negotiates itself spatially in much more complex, interactive, and dynamic manners of which spatial configurational properties form an integral part.

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⁹ While for the one unknowing encountering the space they may seem similar, the latter simply depends on lack of presence whereas former is always already socially and politically charged. Co-absence in this sense may be one of the clearest expressions of the structuring effects of avoidance as examples of their dependency on assumption, prejudice, and projection. That is, while none of those avoiding a space know if the other is there, the reason they are not there is that the other *could be*, and as a result, due to *assumptions of one another's behaviour, several parties avoid to enter, go to, or pass through a certain space*, for a particular period, or a particular time, or more or less perpetually

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